

Application No.: 09/727,207

Attorney Docket No.: 10253-00136-US/RD8120USNA

AMENDMENTS TO THE CLAIMS

This listing of claims will replace all prior versions and listings of claims in the application:

LIST OF CLAIMS

1. (Previously presented) A process for bonding an array of pile loops stitched onto a surface of a backing, each pile loop having a root portion that is held to the surface of a backing by a stitching thread, the process comprising:
 - applying an amorphous thermoplastic binder material having a predetermined melting point to the surface of the backing;
 - stitching the array of pile loops onto the surface of the backing with the stitching thread;
 - mechanically flexing the backing with the array of pile loops thereon into and out of the plane of the backing at a temperature greater than the melting point of the binder material, thereby to cause the binder material to melt and to flow and concentrate in the root portion of the pile loops, in the stitching thread underlaps holding the root portion to the backing, and near the surface of the backing adjacent to the root portions.
2. (Cancelled).
3. (Original) The process of claim 1 wherein the temperature is maintained by immersing the backing with the pile loops thereon in a liquid having a temperature greater than the melting point of the binder.
4. (Original) The process of claim 3 further comprising the step:
 - after immersion in the liquid, drying the backing.
5. (Original) The process of claim 4 wherein the backing is dried at a temperature of at least one hundred ten degrees Centigrade (110 °C) for at least 2 minutes.

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6. (Original) The process of claim 1 wherein the temperature is maintained by passing steam over the backing with the pile loops thereon.
7. (Original) The process of claim 1 further comprising the step:
after passing steam over the backing, drying the backing.
8. (Original) The process of claim 7 wherein the backing is dried at a temperature of at least one hundred ten degrees Centigrade (110 °C) for at least 2 minutes.
9. (Original) The process of claim 1 wherein the temperature is maintained by passing over the backing a heated gas having a temperature greater than the melting point of the binder.
10. (Original) The process of claim 1 further comprising the step:
prior to mechanically flexing the backing, scouring the pile loops to remove substantially all oil and finish therefrom.
11. (Original) The process of claim 6 further comprising the step:
prior to mechanically flexing the backing, scouring the pile loops to remove substantially all oil and finish therefrom.
12. (Original) The process of claim 9 further comprising the step:
prior to mechanically flexing the backing, scouring the pile loops to remove substantially all oil and finish therefrom.
13. (Previously presented) The process of claim 1, wherein the amorphous thermoplastic binder is in the form of a powder having particle sizes in the range of one (1) to five hundred (500) microns, the powder binder having a melting point in the range from at least eighty-five (85) to at most ninety-five degrees Centigrade (95 °C).
14. (Withdrawn).
15. (Withdrawn).

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16. (Original) The process of claim 13 wherein the powder binder is applied to the backing in the form of a slurry comprising the binder powder dispersed in a liquid vehicle, wherein the process further comprises the step of:

after application of the binder slurry, heating the surface of the backing to a temperature greater than the melting point of the powder binder thereby to melt the powder binder to attach the same to the surface of the backing.

Claims 17-27 (Withdrawn).